

ADDRESS OF SECRETARY CORTELYOU AT THE  
DINNER GIVEN BY THE GRADUATES' CLUB.  
HOTEL ASTOR, NEW YORK CITY, FRIDAY  
EVENING, FEBRUARY 12, 1909, IN COMMEMORA-  
TION OF THE ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE BIRTH OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.





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Address of Secretary Cortelyou at the Dinner of the  
Graduates' Club, Hotel Astor, New York City, Friday  
Evening, February 12, 1909, in Commemoration of the  
One Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of Abraham  
Lincoln.

The life to which we render our humble tribute to-night is that of one of the most illustrious of Americans, now numbered among the immortal of the earth. With each passing year the hand of fame adds some new touch of light or character to the picture of the great leader. A plain man of the people, reared in poverty, lacking in what we sometimes mistakenly call education, beset all his life by handicaps and hardships innumerable, he yet came to be the liberator of a race and the savior of a nation.

There is a saying, credited to Napoleon, that "history is a record of what never happened." True it may be, and undoubtedly is, as to some lives, but it is not true in the case of Lincoln. History is telling the story with an accuracy and detail unequaled in all its annals, and, as the world listens to each new page, he becomes the embodiment of those traits and aspirations which are at once the hope and the glory of a land of freemen.

In comment upon a multitude of views of the Martyr-President a recent writer emphasizes the fact that not a word in any of them disturbs the harmony of the whole, and adds:

"It is as if a hundred vessels were approaching the Peak of Teneriffe from as many directions, and

from each the mountain was seen rising lofty above the level of the sea."

No American—no leader among men, in this or any other land or time—ever realized more fully what is meant when we speak of the practical idealist. He wrought with the men and materials that came to his hand, ever with lofty purpose, ever with unselfish devotion to the right, as God gave him to see the right; and how small now seem the critics and the carpers of his day and generation!

But it is not because he rose from humble place to hold exalted station and wield great power that the world perpetuates his name and deeds. Back of these it sees the genuine democracy of the man, that something which the throbbing heart of our common humanity cherishes and holds dear. He was a mighty leader because he interpreted the aspirations of a mighty people, for liberty and justice, and for that national unity which could alone insure their highest development. To this end he labored, "with malice toward none, with charity for all," and during the weary and anxious months of the dread conflict in which he became the transcendent figure, his spirit unfolded in all its greatness and simplicity.

What an inspiration his life and his martyr-death is to lovers of liberty everywhere! In every clime there is this affection for him, this veneration for his memory, that we see about us to-day. It is well for America that she turn aside on this anniversary, to render the tribute that is his due. Pressing forward, with restless energy, toward the goal of larger things, in all the activities of life, drawn unconsciously at times to those paths which lead only to the material aspects of our progress, how surely are we steadied and heartened and encouraged for the better part,

as individuals and as a people, by his struggles and privations, his unselfishness and consecration, his sanity and common sense, his patriotism and his devotion to those principles upon which must rest the foundation of true national greatness.

And so long as the teachings of Abraham Lincoln's life and public service are taken to heart by our people and we press on guided by his faith, his wisdom, his charity, his courage, his honesty, his sincerity, so long will republican institutions be secure; so long will America be, as she has been in the past, "the nursing mother of patriots, rearing her children in the ways of truth and freedom."







